

CALYPSO

WITH GERALD CLARK AND HIS ORIGINAL CALYPSOS

★ THE LION

★ LORD INVADER

★ MacBETH THE GREAT

★ ATILLA THE HUN

When the same seed is put into two different types of soil, different results can be expected. When the African Negro was transplanted to New Orleans, one of the developments was jazz. When he came in contact with Trinidad, the result was Calypso. To attempt a long comparison between these two forms is difficult at the present time. A great deal of scholarly research has gone into the study of jazz and its origins. But Calypso has only recently captured the public interest, and the serious consideration of this music as an art form is still in its infancy.

Calypso first came to the attention of the American public in the late '30's. Tourists to the Caribbean returned with stories of the songs sung at carnival time in Trinidad, Joseph Mitchell's article on Wilmouth Houdini appeared in *The New Yorker*, and some recordings originally made for the West Indies were issued in this country. The results of this new interest were hardly sensational, and the audience for this music was limited to a very small circle in the music world. The big Calypso boom came several years later when a song, sung by The Lord Invader, called *Rum and Coca-Cola* became the top tune in this country and was followed by another sensation, *Stone Cold Dead in the Market*.

The strange sound of many of the words and the colorful names chosen by the singers were sources of puzzlement to Americans. The accent found in Calypso songs is the same modified British inflection heard throughout the West Indies. To this are also added a number of *patois* words. By adopting such titles as King Radio, Lord Invader, Lord Caresser, MacBeth the Great, and Atilla the Hun, Calypsonians seek to distinguish themselves from ordinary mortals. In Trinidad they are considered in the same category as motion picture stars.

Trinidad is a small island at the southern end of the West Indies, off the coast of South America. Its principal products are asphalt, oil, Angostura bitters, and Calypso. Calypso is a song form in which the words play as important a part as the music. The music is generally some rapidly concocted tune which the singer hums to the band and is then improvised on. The words are also improvised, and it is said that no really good Calypsonian ever uses exactly the same words twice.

Calypsonians are the men who create and sing Calypso songs. They are a modern day parallel of the mediaeval troubadors, and their songs cover a similar range of topics—love, homely philosophy, and current events. Calypsonians are also the originators of singing commercials. At carnival time in Trinidad they vie with one another to improvise songs about island products and concerns. The stores and manufacturers whose goods are mentioned offer prizes for the best songs created. *Coffee Coffee*, sung by Atilla the Hun, is similar to these commercials except that it does not mention a brand name.

Traveling from village to village in Trinidad, Calypsonians sing for local dances and entertainments. At carnival time they all gather at Port of Spain, Trinidad's principal city. Carnival is held the first two days preceding Lent. The natives dress in elaborate costumes and parade through

the streets. In the evening they gather in the Victory Calypso Tent to listen to the new songs of the greatest Calypsonians. The Victory Calypso Tent is a wooden structure with a galvanized iron roof. It seats six hundred and has room for two hundred standees. During carnival the crowds are so thick that the tent is well filled before nine o'clock, and more than once latecomers have broken the front of the building trying to get in.

Every Calypsonian has his own style and favorite subject matter. The Lion and King Radio (whose song, *Ugly Woman*, is sung by The Lion in this collection) are famous lovers and generally sing about women. MacBeth the Great, who has lived in New York for about fifteen years, usually offers a few words of wisdom in such songs as his *Man Smart—Woman Smarter*. Current events are the prime interest of Atilla the Hun, and his criticisms of local politics in Trinidad have often landed him in jail. In *Professor Carver*, Atilla commemorates the passing of the famous scientist, George Washington Carver.

One of the most active of all Calypsonians is The Lord Invader. The Invader feels that his audience is most responsive when they can feel some personal connection with his music. On his second visit to the United States, in 1945, he shrewdly changed the first line of one of his popular Calypsos from: *I took my chick down to Amoy Bay* (a popular beach in Trinidad), to: *I took my chick down to Rockaway* (the Long Island beach which some friend had advised him was an American equivalent). Exercising his ability to improvise on the spot, Invader also substituted some polite phrases for those he is accustomed to use when he sings in night clubs while recording *You Don't Need Glasses to See*.

Performances in the United States by great Calypsonians are largely limited to New York and Hollywood, but the rest of the country eagerly follows Calypso through records. New York attracts all of the great singers at one time or another. The Lion came here briefly in 1945 and created a sensation with his singing of *Ugly Woman* at the *Vanguard* in Greenwich Village. In Harlem *The Caribbean Club* calls itself the *home of Calypso* and regularly features a well known Calypso singer and a fine Calypso band headed by Boxil Jackson, manager of the club.

But the big Calypso entertainments in New York are the winter long series of dances and concerts arranged by Harlem's sizable West Indian population. These are wonderful affairs which feature not only singing but also dancing to the compelling rhythms of this music. Music for these affairs is generally provided by Gerald Clark and his *Original Calypsos* or by W. Edwards and his *Original Latin American Dance Orchestra*.

The musicians on these records are headed by Gerald Clark, but this unit differs from his regular group in that it also includes Gregory Felix, himself a Calypso bandleader and a former member of the famous Jim Europe jazz band. The other members are Jack Celestin, piano, Victor Pacheco, violin, Steve Samuel, trumpet, and Aubrey Walks, drums.

BERTRAM STANLEIGH

UGLY WOMAN

If you want to be happy, livin' a king's life,
Never make a pretty woman your wife.
If you want to be happy, livin' a king's life,
Never make a pretty woman your wife.
All you got to do is just what I say,
And then you will be jolly, merry, and gay.
Therefore from a logical point of view
Always marry a woman uglier than you.

A pretty woman makes her husband look
small
And very often cause his downfall.
As soon as she marries, there and then she
starts
To do the things that will break his heart.
And when you think that she's belongin' to
you
She's callin' somebody else to do.
Therefore from a logical point of view
Always marry a woman uglier than you.

An ugly woman gives you your meals on time
And tries to make you comfortable in mind.
At night when you lie in your cozy bed,
She will both caress you and scratch your
head.
And not a minute in the night, she will leave
you alone.
You'll think she want to melt the fat from
your bones.
Therefore from a logical point of view
Always marry a woman uglier than you.

But if you make an ugly woman your wife,
You can be sure you'll be happy in all your
life.
She will never do things in a funny way
To allow the neighbors anything to say.
She wouldn't disregard her husband at all
By exhibiting herself to Peter and Paul.
Therefore from a logical point of view
Always marry a woman uglier than you.

Matters not your friends say that you have no
taste
Marry an ugly woman without disgrace
One who is cute lookin', barbarous, and
rough
With a skin as alligator, bumpy and tough.
Whose feet and mouth fall into her eyes
Her honor is a confirmation besides.
Therefore from a logical point of view
Always marry a woman uglier than you.

MY DONKEY WANT WATER

Hold 'im Joe, hold 'im Joe.
Hold 'im Joe, but don't let 'im go.
Hold 'im Joe. I said, "Hold 'im Joe."
Hold 'im Joe, but don't let 'im go.

My donkey want water.
Hold 'im Joe
When the donkey want water,
Hold 'im Joe
Better hide your daughter,
Hold 'im Joe
When the donkey want water.
Hold 'im Joe

When he's on a journey, he doesn't go
straight.
You can bet your life he's a heavyweight.
This donkey of mine, he don't like weight
When you put him in the cart, he never
walks straight.

chorus

Beholding friends is true jealousy.
They want to take my donkey from me.
They want to put my donkey in pound for
spite.
Just because they know my donkey can bite.

chorus

Some people say that my donkey bad
Because he came from Trinidad.
This donkey of mine, he wouldn't work at all.
All he does is break the walls of his stall.

chorus

FAN ME SAGA BOY

My poor man, you have me bodily
Any more shocks will give me makidie.
My poor man, you have me bodily
Any more shocks will give me makidie.
Just because my blouse ain't longer,
My pants ain't draped and with a waist by
my shoulder,
You wait until I went out on an Xmas
evening,
And you bring your saga in my house
romancing.

Fan me, saga boy, fan me.
I said, "Fan me, saga boy, fan me.
Long live our gracious king,
But kiss me, saga boy, Christmas morning."

You said I'm wrong, but you do not know.
Don't blame the neighbors, for they didn't tell
me so.
I had my idea and decide to lay my trap,
Made my hat up, and then wait in the back.
I heard a knocking; I saw him entering.
The lights went low; I heard a whispering.
There was no earthquake, but the place was
shaking.
You then light the lamp, and you began
singing.

chorus

A hole near the bed, in the partition,
Is where I gained my observation.
He loved your neck, and you made to grab
clothes.
He kissed you in your eyes, and you gave up
the ghost.
He loved your neck a second time again,
Made your contents promise him a fighter
plane,
In the heat of the battle, made a right about,
He mashed your , and you were darn
well knocked out.

chorus

I also saw, though you say I lie,
When you hear the facts, I'm sure you can't
deny.
Same hole through which I gain observation,
I even noticed some naval action.
Because I saw him with a destroyer,
While you were getting ready with your mine
sweeper.
He shot a torpedo at your ship and missed,
But dropped his bombs in your captain's
office.

chorus

PROFESSOR CARVER

Mourn every Negro, mourn,
Professor Carver is dead and gone.
Mourn every Negro, mourn,
Professor Carver is dead and gone.
The deeds of great men, naught can efface.
He was an ornament to his race.
For although born in adversity,
He became the wizard of biology.

His birth was humble and was obscure.
Even as to its true date, he was not sure.
For in those days there was no registration
Of the humble Negro population.
Denied parental care and tuition,
He still acquired a fine education,
And lived on to be subsequently
The greatest authority on biology.

His achievement is an indication
Of the Negro's further step in evolution.
Rising from total obscurity,
To the heights of intellectual sublimity,
His transcendental merit entitles his name
Being emblazoned on the highest pinnacle of
fame.

His glory will be consummated,
If by your children, his life be emulated.

With the Aristotelian philosophy,
With Einstein's theory of relativity,
Augustine's exposition on theology,
And Newton's thesis on gravity,
In fact with every great discovery
Must be ranked his researches in biology.
We bow in reverent admiration
To this illustrious Afro-American.

MAN SMART—WOMAN SMARTER

Let us put men and women together
To find out which one is smarter.
Some say men, but I say no,
Women got the men like long ago.

Not me is the people that say
That the men are leading the women astray,
But I say that the women of today
Smarter than men in every way.

Ever since the world began,
Woman was always foolin' man.
And if you listen to Macbeth attentively,
I'm going to show you how the women
smarter than we.

chorus

Samson was the strongest man long ago
No one could have beaten him as we all
know.
And when he clashed with the woman on top
the bed,
She found that the strength was in the hair of
his head.

chorus

I was treatin' a girl up at Siparia,
And listen how she used her cheap brains on
me.
I was giving her my money all the time,
And she was giving me shocks with a friend
of mine.

chorus

If you capture a girl with a pretty dance,
By takin' her home, you feel you got the
chance.
And when you take her home thinkin' she's
alone,
You open the door to find the next man home.

chorus

Now listen how the women will try to do
When they know they get everything from
you.
They're mean to dye their hair and long their
face,
And wait until you come to cry out, "head-
ache."

chorus

I was supporting a woman independently,
And she promised to make a baby for me.
And when the baby born, and I went to see,
The eyes were blue; it was a Portugee.

chorus

COFFEE, COFFEE

Coffee, coffee, brandy, and wine
Makes your cold disappear in no time.
Then you dance, and then you sing.
You add a little sin, you've done everything.

Coffee, mocha, it's so popular
All over both Americas
Mocha, mocha, and java, java
From New York and right back to Zanzibar

The little senioritas by the score
Gather around and ask for more.
When they get it, they're satisfied,
For it does something to them inside.

chorus

To Americans, with cream it's a treat.
The Turks like it thick and sweet.
All over the world there's a mighty throng
Shouting and singing the coffee song.

chorus

From Brazil to Uruguay,
In fact all over the U.S.A.,
Early in the morning as you pass along,
You can hear the people with their same old
song.

chorus

DOWN AT ROCKAWAY

I took my chick down to Rockaway.
Ah ha, last summer for a holiday,
And when Gerald Clark's orchestra started to
play,
You can imagine how the girls started in to
break away.

She said, "Lord Invader, hold me tight
Squeeze me with all your might.
I don't care if they tell my mamma
How I went romancin' with Lord Invader."

I'll never, never forget that afternoon
When I held her hand and started to croon.
She gazed at me and started to cry,
As she had that strange look in her eye.

chorus

I saw a man looking at us over his shoulder.
She said, "Invader, this is my neighbor."
I answered, "Darling, you know him well?"
She said, "I doesn't care if he go and tell."

chorus

She was a real fine chick, from good family.
I treated her with the essence of courtesy.
She said, "I love you truly and so
Why should I care if the whole world know?"

chorus

The tide was low, so I held her hand,
Listening to Gerald Clark and his band.
She gazed at me loving and tenderly
While I lived in contemplative ecstasy

chorus

YOU DON'T NEED GLASSES TO SEE

Myself and my chick was eatin' bread
She took a comb and start to scratch my
head.
Me and my chick was once eatin' bread
She took a comb and start to scratch my
head.
In a romantic way she then held me tight
Hang on to my pockets and give me advice
I asked her, "Darling, why you picked me?"
She said, "You fool, you don't need glasses
to see."

I then asked her the reason why.
She gazed into my eyes and began to cry,
And she started to roll all over instead.
I saw her eyes was getting so red.
And like a wrestler she held me in a clinch,
Kissed me on my cheek, and give me a pinch.
I asked her, "Baby, why you pinched me?"
She said, "You fool, you don't need glasses
to see."

I lay down on the bed, very cool and calm.
She took her hat off and placed it on my right
arm.
And she told me, "Invader, dearie,
Honey, you know I love you sincerely."
Yes, I was getting warm, and so I didn't care.
She took a feather and started tickling my
ear.
I asked her, "Baby, why tickle me?"
She said, "You fool, you don't need glasses
to see."

She then got up and turned off the light.
She said, "Invader, there's trouble in here
tonight."
She locked the door, and she hid the key.
She said, "Honey, you know you're torcherin'
me."
I made a move to go. She said, "Not a foot!"
She grabbed me in my collar and give me a
boot.
I asked her, "Baby, why you boot me?"
She said, "You fool, you don't need glasses
to see."